(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The Government has received representations requesting restriction on import of Palm Oil through all South Indian Ports. As per the representations, increased import of edible oils is stated to have some impact on domestic prices of coconut oil.

To address the situation, the Government has banned import of palm oil through any port in Kerala.

Dip in Growth of Core Sector to 4.5 per cent in October, 2007

100. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether infrastructure growth dipped to 4.5 per cent till October, 2007 largely due to sharp decline in crude, petroleum and refinery output triggering concern about its possible adverse impact on the overall industrial growth;

(b) if so, whether the 6 core infrastructure industries which commanded a combined weight of 26.7 per cent in the index of industrial production grew at a much lower pace than the corresponding months a year ago; and

(c) if so, what are the main reasons for slow growth and what are the measures being considered to improve the growth in these sectors?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) and (b) The growth of six core Infrastructure Industries (Crude Oil, Petroleum Refinery Products, Coal, Electricity, Cement and Finished Steel) was 4.3% in October 2007 and during the current financial year 2007-08, upto October 2007, the growth rate was 6.2%. As per the latest information these industries recorded a growth of 4.0% in December 2007 and the cumulative growth during April-December 2007-08 works out to 5.7%, compared with the growth of 8.9% during the corresponding period of last year. During April-December 2007-08, Crude Petroleum and Petroleum Refinery Products registered a growth of 0.3% and 7.5%, respectively, compared to 6.0% and 13.2% in the corresponding period of previous year.

(c) Main reasons for the decline are transportation, local disturbances in some production regions, heavy rainfall and land acquisition and forest clearances for coal, capacity constraints for cement and power sector etc.

Government has taken several initiative for increasing capacities and production of infrastructure industries by facilitating capacity creation such as increasing coal production by framing guidelines for new exploration by public and private sector, allotment of coal blocks to Government and private companies etc., introduction of New Exploration Licensing

Policy (NELP) for crude petroleum, National Electricity Policy for accelerated development of Power Sector, setting up of mega projects by private sector, formulation of National Steel Policy etc.

Sector-Specific Refund to Exporters affected by Increase in Rupee Value

101. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to provide sector-specific package for refund to exporters who would be hit by sharp increase in rupee value;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the export target for 2007-08 and how far will we be able to achieve this with the above incentives?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) While there have been a number of relief measures announced by the Government in the context of rupee appreciation, following are the sector specific relief measures:

(i) Duty Entitlement Passbook Scheme (DEPB) at the rate of 3% in respect of nine sectors- Textiles (including handlooms), Readymade garments, leather products, handicrafts, engineering products, processed agricultural products, marine products, sports goods and toys.

(ii) Subvention in the rate of interest of credit by 2% on the outstanding balances for the period 1.4.2007 to 31.3.2008 in respect of the following sectors: Textiles (including handlooms), Readymade garments, leather products, handicrafts, engineering products, processed agricultural products, marine products, sports goods, toys, all exporters from the SME sector, jute and carpets, cashew, coffee and tea, solvent extraction and de-oiled cake and plastics and linoleum.

Additional subvention of 2% in respect of following sectors: leather and leather manufacturers, marine products, all categories of textiles including readymade garments and carpets but excluding manmade fibre, and handicrafts.

(iii) The coverage under Vishesh Krishi and Gram Udyog Yojna, a scheme aimed at promoting export of agriculture and village industry products, was expanded to include additional products and the budget allocation was doubled from Rs. 300 crores to Rs. 600 crores.

(iv) Exemption of Service Tax in respect of Business Exhibition Services in respect of Textiles Sector.

(c) Export target for 2007-08 in US$ 160 billion. As against this target, export reached a level of US$ 111 billion during April-December, 2007 with a growth rate of 21.76% over the corresponding period of the previous year.